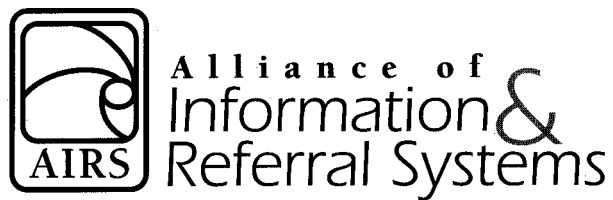


STANDARDS

FOR PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION AND REFERRAL



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The Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) is a membership organization serving information and referral interests throughout the United States, Canada and elsewhere. It offers a professional umbrella for all I&R providers in both public and private organizations.

The mission of AIRS is to unite and serve the field and to advance the profession of I&R as a vital means of bringing people and services together.

For further information about AIRS products and services, contact:

AIRS
P.O. Box 31668
Seattle, WA 98103
(206) 632-AIRS (2477)

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Peter Aberg
AIRS
Seattle, WA

Mary Hogan
United Way of Connecticut
Infoline, Rocky Hill, CT

Georgia Sales
INFO LINE of Los Angeles
El Monte, CA

David Cueny
The Center for Information &
Crisis Services
Lantana, FL

Fred Koss
Information & Referral
Network
Indianapolis, IN

Tylee Smith
Northern Virginia Planning
District Commission
Annandale, VA

Linda S. Daily
FIRST Inc.
White Plains, NY

Theresa Lambert
NASUA
Washington, D.C.

Margaret Strachan
Senior Services of
Seattle/King County
Seattle, WA

Ellen Evans
United Way of America
Alexandria, VA

Sue Meier
International Child Abuse
Network
Canoga Park, CA

Gary Strickland
Family Support Center
Mountain Home AFB, ID

Charlene Hipes
AIRS
Portland, OR

Randall S. Nicklaus
Telephone Counseling &
Referral Service, Inc.
Tallahassee, FL

Judy Windler (Chair)
Texas I&R Network
Austin, TX

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¹ *ACICO Accreditation Process 1997, Guide to CIC Self-Assessment*. Prepared by Carolyn Jones-Simmons. *Guidelines for Establishing Community Information and Referral Services in Public Libraries*. Fourth Edition. Prepared by the Public Library Association Community Information Section. Edited by Norman L. Maas and Dick Manikowski. 1997

● PREFACE ●

In the time since United Way of America first published *National Standards for Information and Referral* in 1973, much has changed in the field of information and referral (I&R) and within the societal context in which I&R operates. Recent advances in technology have resulted in an explosion of information services in all sectors of society, a phenomenon that both facilitates and complicates the provision of information and referral.

I&R providers today have expanded means for *bringing people and services together*. They are also serving a widening continuum of inquirers, at one end of which are people who need more help than ever in finding appropriate community resources within a complicated array, at the other end are those who have the technological means and savvy to navigate through information systems on their own. Today's I&R consumers include not only people in need, but service providers, community planners, researchers, media and others. In addition, I&R providers find themselves more and more in the "global village", where they seek resource information beyond their local communities to assist inquirers, and where they work with colleagues at regional, national and even international levels to implement more effective practices.

This edition of the *Standards* responds to these current realities. For instance, many of today's I&R programs have broadened the inclusion criteria for their resource files beyond earlier parameters suggested by terms such as "health and human services" or even "nonprofit". By using terminology such as "community resource information", these new standards refer more generally to the manifold types of resource file listings an I&R program may avail to inquirers today.

The expanding reach of I&R services is reflected in other ways in this document. The very title of the new *Standards* no longer contains "National" in the hope that these standards will be observed and instituted beyond national borders. It is further hoped that specialized I&R services will embrace these standards along with their comprehensive counterparts. To that end, we thank representatives from the National Association of State Units on Aging and the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities for their contributions, and will continue to solicit comment and suggestion from other specializations within I&R. Byproducts of such a collaboration will not only be quality assurance within the I&R field, but the knitting together of a more seamless network of gateway services throughout society.

Despite the many changes that have occurred in society and in I&R, the basic principles of I&R remain as important today as they were when the first standards were drafted nearly 30 years ago. To better underscore and delineate these hallmark features of I&R, the service delivery process now appears as the very first section of the *Standards*. These new *Standards* continue to stress both the I&R commitment to helping people use community resources to help themselves, and the integral role I&R services play in the coordination of local community services systems.

As more and more people discover what I&R is and recognize its critical functions, it is all the more remarkable that the vision of the early I&R pioneers has provided such an enduring framework. This new edition of the *Standards* is a credit to all those who have joined with this partnership between AIRS and United Way of America to insure that information and referral services are broadly available and effectively delivered.

● INTRODUCTION ●

Every day in communities throughout North America, people begin a difficult and sometimes desperate search for an agency that will provide emergency food or shelter, legal or financial assistance, affordable health care, or other essential services. Whether the individual is well-educated or a high school dropout, financially secure or living in poverty, a long-time resident or a runaway new to the city, a staff person new to human services searching for resources for a client or a seasoned veteran confounded by changes in the service delivery landscape, negotiating the maze of human service providers can be a daunting challenge. Those who are most fortunate find their way to an information and referral (I&R) service and to the help they need.

I&R programs help individuals, families, and communities identify, understand, and effectively use the programs that comprise the human service delivery system. At the community level, I&R services facilitate long-range planning by tracking requests for service and identifying gaps and duplications in services. I&R services also work with other human services organizations to make them a better resource for their clients. Trained I&R specialists help people understand their problems and make informed decisions about possible solutions. They may advocate on behalf of those who need special support, and reinforce the individual's capacity for self-reliance and self-determination through education, affirmation, collaborative planning and problem solving. I&R services are a vital link bringing people and services together.

The purpose of these standards is to establish reference points which define expected practices within the field and provide guidelines that communities or other jurisdictions can use when they develop an I&R program to meet the needs of their people. The standards are the foundation for AIRS Accreditation and provide an organizational context for certification of I&R specialists through the AIRS Certified Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS) and Certified Resource Specialist (CRS) programs. They include bottom line requirements for all I&R services wanting to be accredited as well as recommendations regarding further enhancements of I&R operations for organizations currently positioned to implement them. Whether the I&R service is national or local in scope, comprehensive or specialized in nature, or offered in nonprofit, for-profit or government settings, these standards serve as indicators of service quality and effectiveness, aid in the development of new I&R services, and can be used to upgrade established services.

The standards address all aspects of an I&R service's operation including service delivery, the resource database, reports and measures, cooperative relationships and organizational requirements. They define the information and referral process in concrete terms, establish criteria for database development, mandate support for community planning activities, incorporate a broad view of collaboration at the local, state or provincial, regional and national levels and include provisions for the socially responsible use of technology.

Of particular importance is the vision of information and referral as a coordinated system of service delivery that encourages cooperation, collaboration and responsible use of limited resources, a trend that began in the 1980's and intensified in the 1990's with the advent of the Internet and the ability to share electronic databases. Section IV of the Standards, "Cooperative Relationships," assigns to each I&R service the further responsibility of building or participating in an existing information and referral system to more effectively serve the community. It also addresses cooperation between and among national, regional, state or provincial and local I&R services; development of cooperative working relationships within the local service delivery system; and support for professional I&R associations and I&R initiatives such as statewide, province-wide or region-wide databases that require cooperation beyond local boundaries.

The standards will be more applicable and relevant if the distinction between an I&R service and an I&R system is understood. An I&R service can be a public or private, for-profit or nonprofit organization. It also can be a clearly identifiable, administratively separate unit within a larger organization. Providers include private, nonprofit agencies; United Ways; Voluntary Action Centers; libraries; city, county and state offices; military Family Service/Support Centers; Area Agencies on Aging; child care resource and referral services; hospitals and employee assistance programs. Typically, the I&R service hires and trains a staff, develops a resource database, provides a service, maintains records, and makes periodic reports.

The individual I&R service is the basic unit of the I&R system and each I&R service is part of the system. The system generally serves an area that is considered a logically defined community but may be broader in geographic scope. In a rural area it may consist of only a few organizations that provide information and referral. In a metropolitan area it may include a diverse array of organizations that furnish some type of I&R. Some of these organizations may supply a very specialized type of I&R service (e.g., for people with disabilities or older adults), while others may provide a comprehensive range of assistance. The coordination of all I&R services and programs within a community and, where relevant, beyond, constitutes the I&R system.

The standards, when applied to an I&R system, treat each I&R service as part of the larger system. They outline each of the elements necessary for development of the system with the intent that every service will ensure that each of these elements (a resource database, data collection, data analysis, and provision of I&R services) is available to the community in a coordinated and integrated manner. The individual I&R service, however, may not be responsible for providing all program elements.

The overall goal of I&R services and I&R systems is to be able to deliver the information that is needed to link inquirers with available and appropriate resources at the lowest cost without duplication of effort. This vision of service delivery involves collaboration in maintaining a classification system and resource database; collecting, analyzing and reporting inquirer data; training I&R staff and others in the community; publicizing the I&R system and each individual I&R service that is a part of the system; ensuring broad access to I&R services; providing information and referral to inquirers; providing advocacy, as needed; and following up with inquirers where possible.

In a community where only one I&R service operates, that service represents the entire I&R system and has the responsibility for meeting each of the standards. In larger communities where many I&R services typically operate, the group of services must coordinate to meet each of the standards.

In the 21st century, I&R services will continue to be a vital link between people and services, and standards for assuring their quality will continue to be critical. I&R professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers are encouraged to refer to this document and identify work roles and responsibilities and quality indicators. Boards or advisory committees are encouraged to develop long-range plans for service operation, promotion, and evaluation based on the standards. Funding sources may find that the standards provide valuable background material for making decisions. Applying these standards will help improve existing practices and will enable I&R services to participate fully in all I&R systems within their purview.

● SUMMARY OF STANDARDS ●

Each of the standards is listed below for your reference. The detailed criteria that apply to each standard begin on page 10.

I. SERVICE DELIVERY

The standards in Section I describe the service delivery functions essential for providing information and referral and assuring access for all, including a brief individual assessment of need; a blend of information, referral and advocacy in order to link the person to the appropriate service; and follow-up, as required.

Standard 1: Information Provision

The I&R service shall provide information to an inquirer in response to a direct request for such information. Information can range from a limited response (such as an organization's name, telephone number, and address) to detailed data about community service systems (such as explaining how a group intake system works for a particular agency), agency policies, and procedures for application.

Standard 2: Referral Provision

The I&R service shall provide information and referral services in which the inquirer has one-to-one, human contact with an I&R specialist. The referral process consists of assessing the needs of the inquirer, identifying appropriate resources, assessing appropriate response modes, indicating organizations capable of meeting those needs, providing enough information about each organization to help inquirers make an informed choice, helping inquirers for whom services are unavailable by locating alternative resources, and, when necessary, actively participating in linking the inquirer to needed services.

Standard 3: Advocacy/Intervention

The I&R service shall offer advocacy to ensure that people receive the benefits and services to which they are entitled and that organizations within the established service delivery system meet the collective needs of the community. For purposes of these standards, "advocacy" does not include legislative advocacy (lobbying). All advocacy efforts shall be consistent with policies established by the governing body of the I&R service and shall proceed only with the permission of the inquirer.

Standard 4: Follow-Up

The I&R service shall have a written policy which addresses the conditions under which follow-up must be conducted. The policy shall mandate follow-up with inquirers in endangerment situations and in situations where the specialist believes that the inquirer does not have the necessary capacity to follow through and resolve his or her problem; and must specify a percentage of other inquiries for which follow-up is required. Additional assistance in locating or using services may be necessary.

II. RESOURCE DATABASE

The standards in Section II describe the requirement that the I&R service shall develop, maintain, and/or use an accurate, up-to-date resource database that contains information about available community resources including detailed data on the services they provide and the conditions under which services are available. If the I&R service maintains a resource database of Web sites on the Internet, Resource Database Standards 5 through 9 still apply.

Standard 5: Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The I&R service shall develop criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of agencies and programs in the resource database. These criteria shall be uniformly applied and published so that staff and the public will be aware of the scope and limitations of the database.

Standard 6: Data Elements

A standardized profile shall be developed for each organization that is part of the local community service delivery system or other geographic area covered by the I&R service.

Standard 7: Indexing the Resource Database/Search Methods

Information in the resource database shall be indexed and accessible in ways that support the I&R process.

Standard 8: Classification System (Taxonomy)

The I&R service shall use a standard service classification system to facilitate retrieval of community resource information, to increase the reliability of planning data, to make evaluation processes consistent and reliable, and to facilitate national comparisons of data. Additional classification structures such as keywords may supplement the Taxonomy.

Standard 9: Database Maintenance

The resource database shall be updated through continuous revision or at intervals sufficiently frequent to ensure accuracy of information and comprehensiveness of its contents.

III. REPORTS AND MEASURES

The standards in Section III describe the inquirer data collection, analysis and reporting functions of the I&R service.

Standard 10: Inquirer Data Collection

The I&R service shall establish and use a system for collecting and organizing inquirer data which facilitates appropriate referrals and provides a basis for describing requests for service, identifying service gaps and overlaps, assisting with needs assessments, supporting the development of products, identifying issues for staff training and facilitating the development of the resource information system. Inquirer data includes information gathered during follow-up as well as that acquired during the original contact.

Standard 11: Data Analysis and Reporting

The I&R service shall develop reports using inquirer data and/or data from the resource database to support community planning activities (or planning at other levels), internal analysis and advocacy.

IV. COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The standards in Section IV focus on the responsibilities of the I&R service to the local I&R system, the local community service delivery system, and state or provincial, regional, national and international I&R networks.

Standard 12: Cooperative Relationships within the Local I&R System

In communities which have a multiplicity of comprehensive and specialized I&R providers, the I&R service shall develop cooperative working relationships to build a coordinated I&R system which ensures broad access to information and referral services, maximizes the utilization of existing I&R resources, avoids duplication of effort and encourages seamless access to community resource information. I&R services within the system may choose to be “full service” programs performing all necessary I&R functions within their designated service area; or may prefer to partner with one or more I&R services to share those functions. (E.g., one I&R service might build and maintain the resource database and another might assume responsibility for service delivery.)

Standard 13: Cooperative Relationships within the Local Service Delivery System

The I&R service shall strive to develop cooperative working relationships with local service providers to build an integrated service delivery system which ensures broad access to community services, maximizes the utilization of existing resources, avoids duplication of effort and gaps in services, and facilitates the ability of people who need services to easily find the most appropriate provider.

Standard 14: Cooperative Relationships Among Local, State or Provincial, Regional, National, and International I&R Providers

Comprehensive and specialized I&R services at all geographic levels (local, state/provincial, regional, national and international) shall strive to develop formal and informal working relationships with the objective of broadening the availability of information and referral to all inquirers, facilitating access to appropriate resources regardless of their origin and/or location, avoiding duplication of effort and funding, expanding the effectiveness of social analysis with more global information about needs and services, and augmenting the impact of advocacy efforts through coordination, where possible.

Standard 15: Participation in State or Provincial, Regional, National, and International I&R Associations

The I&R service shall strive to strengthen state or provincial, regional, national, and international I&R networks by becoming active in planning, program development, advocacy, training, and other efforts at these levels.

V. ORGANIZATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The standards in Section V describe the governance and administrative structure an I&R service needs to have in place in order for it to carry out its mission. Included are establishing itself as a legal entity, providing for ongoing program evaluation, developing policies and procedures which guide the organization, developing an organizational code of ethics, establishing sound fiscal practices, providing a conducive physical environment, managing personnel, providing for staff training, and increasing public awareness regarding the availability of information and referral services and their value to the community.

Standard 16: Governance

The auspices under which the I&R service operates shall ensure the achievement of I&R goals and meet the stated goals of funders.

Standard 17: Personnel Administration

The I&R service shall provide a framework and mechanisms for program and personnel management and administration that guarantee the continuity and consistency required for effective service delivery.

Standard 18: Staff Training

The I&R service shall have a training policy and make training available to paid and volunteer staff.

Standard 19: Promotion and Outreach

The I&R service shall establish and maintain a program which increases public awareness of I&R services, their objectives, and their value to the community.

● STANDARDS ●

I. SERVICE DELIVERY

The standards in Section I describe the service delivery functions essential for providing information and referral and assuring access for all, including a brief individual assessment of need; a blend of information, referral and advocacy in order to link the person to the appropriate service; and follow-up, as required.

Standard 1: Information Provision

The I&R service shall provide information to an inquirer in response to a direct request for such information. Information can range from a limited response (such as an organization's name, telephone number, and address) to detailed data about community service systems (such as explaining how a group intake system works for a particular agency), agency policies, and procedures for application.

Criteria

1. Information shall be accurate and pertinent to the request of the inquirer.
2. The I&R specialist shall encourage recontact by the inquirer if the initial information proves to be incorrect, inappropriate or insufficient to link him or her with needed services.

Standard 2: Referral Provision

The I&R service shall provide information and referral services in which the inquirer has one-to-one, human contact with an I&R specialist. The referral process consists of assessing the needs of the inquirer, identifying appropriate resources, assessing appropriate response modes, indicating organizations capable of meeting those needs, providing enough information about each organization to help inquirers make an informed choice, helping inquirers for whom services are unavailable by locating alternative resources, and, when necessary, actively participating in linking the inquirer to needed services.

Criteria

1. The I&R service shall strive to provide access to community resource information in a variety of formats and through a variety of paths which include supported access through an I&R worker or case manager and options for independent access by end users (including staff in other organizations).
2. For local I&R services, hours of service shall be appropriate to community needs. If the I&R service is not available on a 24-hour basis, it shall provide an answering system when staff are not present which gives inquirers the number and office hours of an organization that will offer service in an emergency. National I&R services not available on a 24-hour basis shall address the issue of people calling from other time zones.
3. If the I&R service does not, itself, provide a formal crisis intervention service but receives calls from people who are in crisis, it shall be connected by prearranged protocols and, if feasible, direct telephone transfer, to an appropriate agency that does.

4. During hours of operation, the I&R service shall provide, at little or no cost to the inquirer, timely access to an I&R specialist.
5. Trained I&R specialist/s (paid and/or volunteer) shall provide the I&R service. It is recommended that professional staff seek Certified Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS) status through the AIRS Certification Program or, if applicable in a particular field, certification through another program recognized at the state/provincial, regional or national level.
6. The I&R specialist (paid and volunteer) shall have the skills to meet the needs of people who are in crisis.
7. The I&R specialist (paid and volunteer) shall have the skills to meet the needs of difficult inquirers (e.g., people who are lonely, despondent or angry).
8. The I&R specialist (paid and volunteer) shall have the skills to meet the needs of special populations (e.g., older adults, people with disabilities, sexual minorities).
9. The I&R specialist shall:
 - Establish rapport with the inquirer and use active listening skills to discern the presenting problem;
 - Respond to each inquirer in a professional, non-judgmental and culturally-appropriate manner;
 - Make an accurate assessment of the inquirer's problems and needs asking relevant questions to elicit information necessary for an accurate referral;
 - Present the inquirer with various approaches to addressing the problem;
 - Explore the inquirer's own resources (e.g., friends, family, faith-based community);
 - Effectively utilize the resource information system to identify resources to meet the inquirer's needs;
 - Where possible and desirable, provide at least three referrals to give the inquirer a choice (and to protect the I&R service from being perceived as making a "recommendation");
 - Provide accurate and necessary information to enable the inquirer to choose the most appropriate resource(s);
 - Recognize the inquirer's right to make his or her own choices;
 - Pursue the problem until both the inquirer and the specialist are assured that all appropriate options have been exhausted;
 - Suggest ways the inquirer can advocate for him or herself, when appropriate (empowerment);
 - When warranted and with the inquirer's permission, make direct contact and communicate effectively on behalf of the inquirer with other agency staff through three-way calling, notification of the inquirer's forthcoming contact, or scheduling of appointments;
 - Refer to an advocacy organization or negotiate on behalf of inquirers to assist them in obtaining a needed service when they cannot effectively represent themselves or when they have a complaint about a service;
 - Encourage inquirers to call back if the information proves incorrect, inappropriate, or insufficient to link them with the needed service(s);
 - Follow up, when appropriate; and
 - Accurately record transaction information for use in reports.

10. The I&R service shall ensure that the confidentiality of inquirers is preserved. The identity of inquirers, their requests and the information given to them shall not be communicated to others unless:
 - Release of information is required by law (e.g., child abuse reporting);
 - Careful consideration indicates the presence or risk of serious harm to the inquirer or another person, and then communication may be only to those who must be informed in order to reduce harm or risk; or
 - The inquirer has given explicit permission for the information to be disclosed to another person or agency. The inquirer should specify what information may be given and to whom.
 - If permission is required, the agency shall have a policy in place regarding when such permission needs to be in writing and when it can be verbal.
11. The inquirer's privacy and dignity shall be respected within the I&R service by avoiding any non-essential discussion or gossip concerning the inquirer. This restriction shall not prevent professional discussion about the services provided or to be provided to the individual.
12. The I&R service shall provide barrier-free access to its services for individuals and groups who have special needs, e.g., TDD/TTY access for people with hearing impairments; language access for inquirers who speak languages other than English; and physical access for people with disabilities if the I&R service assists inquirers at its facility.
13. The I&R service may also make its information and/or services available to the community in a variety of other ways. The I&R service may:
 - Establish a presence at community facilities where inquirers are helped face-to-face;
 - Participate in local case management collaboratives;
 - Compile and distribute a directory of services in print or electronic format;
 - Make copies of its database and software available to other organizations that provide information and/or referrals;
 - Allow the public to visit the I&R facility to use the resource database or make its information about community resources available through community-based kiosks or other similar gateways; and
 - Make all or a portion of its database available on a Web page on the Internet.

In each case, the information shall include either e-mail access to an I&R specialist or a telephone number for such access.
14. The I&R service shall utilize technology that improves access to service and enhances its ability to serve inquirers efficiently and effectively while preserving the level and quality of its core services. "Technology" includes telephone systems, telephony, telecommunications, I&R software packages, directories on diskette and self-service mechanisms such as automated attendants/interactive voice response systems, fax-on-demand, community kiosks and searchable I&R databases on the Internet.
 - The I&R service shall, within the constraints of its budget and mission, use state-of-the-art technology which is necessary to meet the needs of its end users.
 - Under no circumstances shall technology reduce or replace supported access through a qualified I&R specialist. The main role of technology is to enhance or strengthen person-to-person contact, not to reduce or eliminate such contact or make it more difficult.
 - The I&R service shall develop strategies and procedures to ensure that all inquirers receive comparable benefit, either directly or indirectly, from the use of technology. One group of inquirers should not benefit while the needs of other groups are ignored.

- If the I&R service uses telephone technology which allows for the collection of identifying information about an inquirer without his or her explicit permission, it shall develop policies and procedures that protect the inquirer's right to privacy and anonymity while preserving the I&R specialist's ability to provide for the individual's safety should personal identification become necessary.
- If the I&R service provides resource information through an automated attendant (a menu-driven telephone system), it shall develop procedures to encourage inquirers to transfer to a live specialist if consultation and guidance are required. Inquirers shall be able to make the transfer without having to make another call.
- The I&R service shall have access to the Internet for locating information helpful to inquirers.

Standard 3: Advocacy/Intervention

The I&R service shall offer advocacy to ensure that people receive the benefits and services to which they are entitled and that organizations within the established service delivery system meet the collective needs of the community. For purposes of these standards, "advocacy" does not include legislative advocacy (lobbying). All advocacy efforts shall be consistent with policies established by the governing body of the I&R service and shall proceed only with the permission of the inquirer.

Criteria

1. **Individual (Client) Advocacy:** The I&R service shall intervene on behalf of individuals to help them establish eligibility for or obtain needed services when they have been denied benefits or services to which they are entitled, when they need assistance to communicate their needs to a service provider or otherwise effectively represent themselves, or when they have a complaint about a service. Individual advocacy efforts seek to meet individual needs without attempting to change social institutions.
2. **System Advocacy:** The I&R service shall advocate for changes in community conditions, structures or institutions when modifications in the service delivery system as a whole are required to ensure the adequate availability of essential community services. Such advocacy may include the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on human service needs.

Standard 4: Follow-Up

The I&R service shall have a written policy which addresses the conditions under which follow-up must be conducted. The policy shall mandate follow-up with inquirers in endangerment situations and in situations where the specialist believes that the inquirer does not have the necessary capacity to follow through and resolve his or her problem; and must specify a percentage of other inquiries for which follow-up is required. Additional assistance in locating or using services may be necessary.

Criteria

1. Follow-up shall be conducted in situations where the inquirer will clearly benefit from such an action.
2. Follow-up shall consist of contacting the inquirer and/or the organizations to which a referral has been made to find out if the service is being provided and the need is being met and if the service is not being provided, why not. Follow-up may also be used to determine if the inquirer is satisfied with the I&R service as a means of ascertaining the effectiveness of the I&R services provided.

3. Information gathered during follow-up shall be verified and used to correct resource database information that may be incorrect.
4. If the inquirer has not received services or the need has not been met, the I&R service shall determine whether there is still a need and make additional appropriate referrals. The I&R service shall also document the follow-up results (that service was not received) for future reference.
5. Information gathered during the follow-up process may be used as a further means of evaluating the effectiveness of existing community service providers and for identifying gaps and overlaps in community services.

II. RESOURCE DATABASE ---

The standards in Section II describe the requirement that the I&R service shall develop, maintain, and/or use an accurate, up-to-date resource database that contains information about available community resources including detailed data on the services they provide and the conditions under which services are available. If the I&R service maintains a resource database of Web sites on the Internet, Resource Database Standards 5 through 9 still apply.

Standard 5: Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The I&R service shall develop criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of agencies and programs in the resource database. These criteria shall be uniformly applied and published so that staff and the public will be aware of the scope and limitations of the database.

Criteria

1. The I&R service shall have a written policy that describes inclusion/exclusion criteria for the resource database.
2. The I&R service shall review the inclusion/exclusion criteria on a regular basis (at a minimum, every three years) to ensure that they continue to meet the changing needs of the community.
3. If the I&R service is comprehensive, the inclusion/exclusion criteria shall address the needs of all groups in the community; shall include government, nonprofit and critical for-profit organizations; and may include other for-profit organizations and entities such as support groups which are not incorporated as organizations.
4. If the I&R service is specialized, the inclusion/exclusion criteria shall adequately address the needs of its target population and shall have referral points for the types of services that are excluded.
5. If the I&R service charges a fee for the inclusion of organizations in its database, that practice shall be published as a part of its inclusion/exclusion criteria.

Standard 6: Data Elements

A standardized profile shall be developed for each organization that is part of the local community service delivery system or other geographic area covered by the I&R service.

Criteria

1. **Mandatory Data Elements:** The agency profile shall include (but not be limited to) the following data which the I&R service shall collect when appropriate:
 - Unique record identification number;
 - Code to identify the organization responsible for maintaining the record (to facilitate combination, in a single database, of records maintained by different organizations);
 - Organization name (legal name) and AKAs including former name(s), popular names and popular acronyms;
 - Street and mailing addresses (main location and branches);
 - Telephone number(s) including TDD/TTY, fax, Web site address and electronic mail addresses;

- Hours and days of operation;
- Services provided and target populations served;
- Eligibility requirements and exclusions (e.g., age, gender);
- Documents which may be required by the organization for application (such as birth certificates);
- Geographic area served;
- Application process;
- Languages other than English in which the service is offered (bilingual staff or interpreter services);
- Legal status (e.g., nonprofit, government, for-profit, unincorporated group);
- Fee structure for service, if any (the phrase “sliding scale” may be sufficient; use “none” or the equivalent when applicable);
- Method of payment accepted (e.g., Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance);
- Name and title of the organization’s administrator/director; and
- Date the information was last verified.

2. Recommended Data Elements: It is recommended that the agency profile include:

- Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) as a unique identifier (to permit record matching to eliminate duplicates when records maintained by different local I&R services are combined in statewide I&R databases or to link I&R records with those in databases maintained by organizations outside the I&R field);
- Program capacity/units of service (e.g., number of persons the program can serve, number of shelter beds, number of training slots available);
- Access for people with disabilities or known barriers to such access;
- Licensing/accrediting bodies and type of licensing;
- Identification of local or national organizations with which an agency may be affiliated but whose title or acronym does not indicate this affiliation; and
- Title and/or name of the contact person for updating the record.

3. Optional Data Elements: The agency profile also may include:

- Travel information such as cross streets and public transportation information;
- Length of time on the organization's waiting list;
- Number and qualifications of staff;
- Source of funds;
- Annual budget;
- Title and/or name of the person (intake worker) who will assist the inquirer; and
- Publications available.

4. I&R Database Software: The I&R service shall use I&R database software that supports the data elements required in these AIRS standards.

Standard 7: Indexing the Resource Database/Search Methods

Information in the resource database shall be indexed and accessible in ways that support the I&R process.

Criteria

1. Information in the resource database shall be retrievable by a variety of search methods including the following:
 - Alphabetically by organization name (including related acronyms or abbreviations);
 - Type of service provided with extensive cross-references;
 - Specific target population served, where applicable;
 - Geographic area or political subdivision served; and
 - Geographic location.
2. Information in the resource database may also be retrievable by other search methods including:
 - Language(s) (other than English) in which the service is available;
 - Fee structure (to allow for access to services that are available at no cost or on a sliding scale);
 - Access for people with disabilities;
 - Legal status of the organization (government, nonprofit, for-profit, unincorporated group); and
 - Source of funds.

Standard 8: Classification System (Taxonomy)

The I&R service shall use a standard service classification system to facilitate retrieval of community resource information, to increase the reliability of planning data, to make evaluation processes consistent and reliable, and to facilitate national comparisons of data. Additional classification structures such as keywords may supplement the Taxonomy.

Criteria

1. I&R services in the United States shall use the AIRS/INFO LINE Taxonomy of Human Services (formally titled *A Taxonomy of Human Services: A Conceptual Framework with Standardized Terminology and Definitions for the Field*) or have a clearly written plan for implementation. In other countries, the standard shall either be a nationally adopted classification system or the AIRS/INFO LINE Taxonomy.
2. The I&R service may customize the AIRS/INFO LINE Taxonomy to adapt it to the community's size, nature, and organizational needs to make the system more specific. These adaptations shall be made using nationally recognized principles for customization so as not to change the basic structure of the classification system or the related service definitions.
3. Local modifications shall be reported to the Taxonomy system administrator for consideration for inclusion in the master system.
4. The I&R service shall have procedures in place to integrate Taxonomy updates. All appropriate Taxonomy codes in updates shall be integrated within 6 months of issuance.
5. The I&R service shall use I&R database software that supports the AIRS/INFO LINE Taxonomy of Human Services minimum requirements established by the AIRS Taxonomy Committee.

Standard 9: Database Maintenance

The resource database shall be updated through continuous revision or at intervals sufficiently frequent to ensure accuracy of information and comprehensiveness of its contents.

Criteria

1. The resource database shall be totally updated, at least annually, by surveys, telephone contact or on-site visits to organizations listed in the database. Records in the database shall include the date of last update.
2. Procedures shall be in place for integrating interim information changes.
3. Procedures shall be in place for identifying new agencies, acquiring required information about them and including them in the database.
4. Update verification procedures shall be in place to ensure accuracy. The I&R service may, for example, request a signature on the update form.
5. The I&R service shall safeguard its resource database through duplication or computerized back-up. The back-up database shall be kept in a secure location where it will be protected from destruction or theft.

III. REPORTS AND MEASURES

The standards in section III describe the inquirer data collection, analysis and reporting functions of the I&R service.

Standard 10: Inquirer Data Collection

The I&R service shall establish and use a system for collecting and organizing inquirer data which facilitates appropriate referrals and provides a basis for describing requests for service, identifying service gaps and overlaps, assisting with needs assessments, supporting the development of products, identifying issues for staff training and facilitating the development of the resource information system. Inquirer data includes information gathered during follow-up as well as that acquired during the original contact.

Criteria

1. The primary goal of data collection is to garner enough information about inquirers to help them address and/or resolve their problems.
2. Inquirers have the right to withhold information. While data collection is important, the delivery of quality services to the inquirer is paramount.
3. Inquirer data collection and reporting activities shall facilitate the analyses needed to support:
 - The human service needs of inquirers;
 - Management information needs (e.g., planning for staffing needs);
 - Community needs assessment;
 - Community planning;
 - Allocation of funding; and
 - Research.
4. The data collected shall provide enough information about inquirers' needs to identify:
 - Service requests;
 - Gaps in services;
 - Insufficient resources/service shortages (e.g., the organization provides shelter, but only for families and the inquirer is a single man; the organization provides utility assistance, but has run out of funds);
 - Trends in community service provision/unmet needs;
 - Demographic data; and
 - Profiles of inquirers served (aggregate data only).

5. Data collected for I&R service analysis and reporting purposes shall be based on I&R agency policy and local and/or state or provincial requirements, and may include, but not be limited to, the following:
- General information about the inquirer/person needing service:
 - City; and
 - ZIP code, postal code or other geographical area indicator.
 - Relationship of the person needing services to the inquirer (if other than the inquirer).
 - Other information about the inquirer/person needing service:
 - Age;
 - Gender;
 - Language requirements (other than English);
 - Target population membership (e.g., disability, homeless); and
 - First time/repeat inquirer.
 - Type of service requested.
 - Narrative description of the inquiry (“notes”).
 - Referral outcome:
 - Referral provided; or
 - Service gap recorded; and
 - Reason for gap (e.g., no agency provides the service, available services not affordable, service not available in the required language).
 - Organization(s) to which the inquirer was referred.
 - Information about the inquiry:
 - Type of I&R service provided (e.g., information, referral, advocacy; or units of service);
 - Method of contact with the I&R service (e.g., letter, telephone call, walk-in, automated attendant contact, Internet Web site contact); and
 - Source of information about the I&R service (e.g., newspaper, TV, friend), when available.
 - Follow-up information:
 - Follow-up contact (inquirer, agency referred to or both);
 - Follow-up results (whether the inquirer received services and if not, why not); and
 - Additional referrals or other actions, if any.
 - Client tracking/case management information which may include:
 - Name of the inquirer/person needing service;
 - Street address;
 - Telephone number;
 - Income level;
 - Source of income;
 - Case plan; and
 - Case history.
 - Information automatically recorded by the system:
 - Unique identifier for the inquiry (transaction number);
 - Date of the inquiry;
 - Start and end times for the inquiry;
 - Length of inquiry; and
 - I&R specialist handling the inquiry.

6. Data collected for national reporting purposes shall include:
 - Total number of incoming calls (or other types of inquiries); and
 - Type of service requested or the primary needs or problems of each inquirer.
7. The I&R service shall have in place appropriate security precautions which protect and keep confidential data collection forms and inquirer information. The security system shall conform to all applicable statutes and shall include provisions for the storage, retrieval, use and ultimate disposition of records. Unless the I&R service is involved in a cooperative service delivery arrangement in which client records are shared, those outside the I&R service shall see only aggregate data.

Standard 11: Data Analysis and Reporting

The I&R service shall develop reports using inquirer data and/or data from the resource database to support community planning activities (or planning at other levels), internal analysis and advocacy.

Criteria

1. At a minimum, the reports shall have the ability to provide statistics regarding inquirer characteristics, service requests, service use, unmet needs, community assets and gaps and duplications in services. The reports shall also provide data to measure the effectiveness of the I&R service and service outcomes.
2. The I&R service shall be responsible for compiling timely data for planning needs and advocacy as outlined under the data collection section.
3. The I&R service shall be responsive to specific requests for data to support planning functions and advocacy.
4. The I&R service shall offer its analyses and assistance to decision makers involved in the assessment and planning of service delivery and advocacy.
5. The I&R service shall compile data collected for national reporting purposes using guidelines established by the AIRS Standards Committee.

IV. COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The standards in Section IV focus on the responsibilities of the I&R service to the local I&R system, the local community service delivery system, and state or provincial, regional, national and international I&R networks.

Standard 12: Cooperative Relationships Within the Local I&R System

In communities which have a multiplicity of comprehensive and specialized I&R providers, the I&R service shall develop cooperative working relationships to build a coordinated I&R system which ensures broad access to information and referral services, maximizes the utilization of existing I&R resources, avoids duplication of effort and encourages seamless access to community resource information. I&R services within the system may choose to be “full service” programs performing all necessary I&R functions within their designated service area; or may prefer to partner with one or more I&R services to share those functions (e.g., one I&R service might build and maintain the resource database and another might assume responsibility for service delivery).

Criteria

1. I&R services within the system shall participate in ongoing cooperative program planning and development activities which take into consideration community needs, existing resources, and the activities of other I&R services. Each I&R service shall:
 - Participate in efforts to identify community I&R needs;
 - Maintain current information on other I&R services and their activities;
 - Develop priorities for I&R program development;
 - Participate in existing cooperative I&R efforts;
 - Serve as a catalyst for new cooperative service arrangements; and
 - Participate in decision making that addresses community-wide I&R issues.
2. I&R services within the system shall encourage and participate in cooperative planning, implementation of policies, and advocacy for sustained funding for I&R. Each I&R service shall:
 - Identify, develop and maintain relationships with policy makers and funding organizations;
 - Formulate collective policy recommendations and implementation strategies and communicate those recommendations to appropriate audiences;
 - Participate in community planning efforts using relevant inquirer statistics and resource data; and
 - Develop strategies to ensure ongoing funding for I&R services that are a part of the I&R system.

3. I&R services within the system shall coordinate their service delivery to avoid duplication of effort and encourage service integration.
 - I&R services within the system shall cooperate with one another to make information and referral broadly available to all inquirers;
 - Comprehensive and specialized I&R services that are part of the system shall develop and define their working relationships.
 - I&R services within the system shall encourage cooperative service arrangements such as after-hours coverage, linked telephone systems and linked Web sites.
 - I&R services within the system shall explore innovative methods of delivering comprehensive I&R services.
4. I&R services within the system shall encourage the community-wide use of a standard classification system to ensure the effective utilization of community resource information and increase the reliability of local planning data.
 - In the United States, I&R services within the system shall use the AIRS/INFO LINE Taxonomy of Human Services to ensure that:
 - Information in their separate resource databases is searchable using a common indexing structure;
 - Information in their separate databases can be combined in a centralized, community-wide database, if desirable; and
 - Community resource information available through the local system is useful at state or provincial, regional, national and international levels.
 - In other countries, the standard for I&R services within the system shall either be the AIRS/INFO LINE Taxonomy of Human Services or the nationally adopted classification system for their area. (See also Standard 4, Classification System).
5. I&R services within the system shall endeavor to participate in local database collaboratives as a means of avoiding duplication of database maintenance activities and achieving broader coverage of different types of community resources. The I&R services within the system shall:
 - Appropriately divide information gathering tasks and oversee the regular and systematic exchange of resource database information; and
 - Maintain comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date information on the community resources for which they have maintenance responsibility.
6. I&R services within the system shall work cooperatively to identify changing community needs and to respond to those needs in a timely and appropriate fashion. This cooperation shall be regular and frequent to ensure that there is an immediate and effective response to:
 - Sudden changes in community conditions (e.g., layoffs in a particular industry or a community-wide disaster) which may require special outreach efforts or other forms of collaborative response;
 - Changes in legislation; and
 - New information relative to the area served that needs to be incorporated.

7. I&R services within the system shall participate in community-wide data collection, analysis and reporting activities. I&R services shall:
 - Develop a system-wide agreement on data collection priorities;
 - Agree on a consistent method for data collection and information to be collected;
 - Systematically collect the inquirer (and other) data for which they are responsible;
 - Contribute their aggregate inquirer data to a community-wide pool to create a more complete picture of community needs;
 - Develop community-wide reports which identify community assets as well as gaps and duplications in service and other inadequacies in the local community service delivery system; and
 - Share the collective reports with community planning bodies, policy makers and funders.
8. I&R services within the system shall strive to maximize the resources available to the I&R system as a whole by coordinating supportive functions such as public relations, marketing, and staff training; and by implementing cooperative administrative procedures where possible. Areas for cooperation may include:
 - Joint sponsorship of consultation, technical assistance or training for paid I&R staff and volunteers or for the staff of other community organizations with related responsibilities;
 - Joint participation in workshops, seminars and other training activities offered by I&R services within the system or by other organizations;
 - Regular exchange of current information about I&R services;
 - Coordination of publicity, public relations and marketing efforts to heighten awareness of the information and referral services that are available through the system emphasizing the value of community I&R services, how they fit into a seamless system and how they can be accessed by people in the community depending on the nature of their needs;
 - Engaging in cooperative funding strategies such as subcontracting, subscriptions, or fees for service arrangements;
 - Sharing facilities and equipment;
 - Sharing paid employees and volunteers; and
 - Sharing accounting, legal, purchasing, and management assistance.

Standard 13: Cooperative Relationships Within the Local Service Delivery System

The I&R service shall strive to develop cooperative working relationships with local service providers to build an integrated service delivery system which ensures broad access to community services, maximizes the utilization of existing resources, avoids duplication of effort and gaps in services and facilitates the ability of people who need services to easily find the most appropriate provider.

Criteria

1. The I&R service shall explore opportunities for joint service delivery with local service providers, e.g., participation in local case management collaboratives.
2. The I&R service shall work with local service providers to assess the viability of using its call center capacity as the first point of contact for calls into the system.
3. The I&R service shall develop cooperative working relationships that assure utilization of its resource database by other service providers in the system.
4. The I&R service shall work cooperatively with local service providers to address issues that have a critical impact on the community as a whole such as disaster relief and recovery, homelessness, welfare reform, managed health care and one-stop co-located human services.
5. The I&R service shall encourage collaborating service providers to participate in community-wide data collection, analysis and reporting activities, where appropriate.

Standard 14: Cooperative Relationships Among Local, State or Provincial, Regional, National, and International I&R Providers

Comprehensive and specialized I&R services at all geographic levels (local, state/provincial, regional, national and international) shall strive to develop formal and informal working relationships with the objective of broadening the availability of information and referral to all inquirers, facilitating access to appropriate resources regardless of their origin and/or location, avoiding duplication of effort and funding, expanding the effectiveness of social analysis with more global information about needs and services, and augmenting the impact of advocacy efforts through coordination, where possible.

Criteria

1. Local I&R services shall identify and develop cooperative working relationships with key state/provincial, national and international I&R providers to:
 - Provide an alternative source for specialized referrals when local resources are not available;
 - Develop access to a broader spectrum of useful Web-based resources, written materials and other products in specialized areas;
 - Better meet the needs of low incidence populations;
 - Obtain broader perspectives on changing needs, available resources, legislation and policy issues;
 - Formulate collective policy recommendations and implementation strategies and communicate those recommendations to appropriate audiences; and
 - Obtain information and support from national I&R services for local advocacy efforts.
2. National I&R services shall identify and develop cooperative working relationships with key state and local I&R programs to:
 - Provide an alternative source for referrals when nationally maintained resources are inappropriate;
 - Obtain or verify information about local service providers on behalf of specific inquirers;
 - Collect data on the activities of key local service providers to augment their resource information systems;
 - Provide information on broad based topics of interest to local communities;
 - Identify state/provincial or local trends regarding inquirer needs and service provision to augment information on national trends;
 - Formulate collective policy recommendations and implementation strategies and communicate those recommendations to appropriate audiences; and
 - Obtain information and support from local I&R services for advocacy efforts at the national level.

3. National and international I&R services shall identify and develop cooperative working relationships with other key national/international I&Rs to:
 - Coordinate their I&R efforts to achieve broader, more seamless access for inquirers served by both and avoid duplication of service delivery, where possible;
 - Participate in database collaboratives, where they exist, as a means of avoiding duplication of database maintenance activities;
 - Develop agreements to ensure that technology is compatible so that information can be effectively shared;
 - Develop and maintain consistency in data collection and reporting scope, criteria and terminology;
 - Share resources, expand information and referral networks and collaborate on product development and dissemination;
 - Formulate collective policy recommendations and implementation strategies and communicate those recommendations to appropriate audiences; and
 - Collaborate on mechanisms for informing funders, national agencies and national policy makers of the needs and services of I&R networks.

Standard 15: Participation in State or Provincial, Regional, National, and International I&R Associations

The I&R service shall strive to strengthen state or provincial, regional, national and international I&R networks by becoming active in planning, program development, advocacy, training and other efforts at these levels.

Criteria

1. The I&R service shall strive to participate in the activities of its state/provincial or regional I&R association and/or the international I&R association (AIRS).
2. The I&R service shall participate in statewide or province-wide database efforts where they exist.
3. The I&R service shall participate in data collection efforts at the state or provincial, regional, national and international levels.

V. ORGANIZATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The standards in Section V describe the governance and administrative structure an I&R service needs to have in place in order for it to carry out its mission. Included are establishing itself as a legal entity, providing for ongoing program evaluation, developing policies and procedures which guide the organization, developing an organizational code of ethics, establishing sound fiscal practices, providing a conducive physical environment, managing personnel, providing for staff training, and increasing public awareness regarding the availability of information and referral services and their value to the community.

Standard 16: Governance

The auspices under which the I&R service operates shall ensure the achievement of I&R goals and meet the stated goals of funders.

Criteria

1. **Governing Body:** The I&R service shall have (or be part of an organization that has) a governing body (e.g., Board of Directors) which is constituted according to the laws of its state or province, which adequately represents the diverse interests of the community and which oversees implementation of program goals and objectives to assure quality of service. The governing body shall, at a minimum:
 - Provide for a regular cycle of needs assessment, program planning and service delivery, and conduct an annual evaluation of I&R activities;
 - Formulate policies needed to successfully implement and sustain a quality I&R service;
 - Provide human resources to adequately staff the I&R service;
 - Assist in procuring financial and technical assistance to sustain the I&R service;
 - Be responsible for contracting, adopting an annual budget, maintaining financial records, and providing an annual audit by an independent certified public accountant;
 - Promote the I&R system throughout the community ensuring appropriate publicity, public relations and marketing;
 - Meet at least quarterly as a general body;
 - Maintain minutes of all official proceedings that any interested party can inspect; and
 - Be composed of members who serve without pay and accrue no financial benefit as a result of membership. However, members may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses.
2. **Advisory Committee:** If the organization/I&R service has a governing body that is not local or does not adequately represent the community it serves, it shall have an advisory committee to assure sufficient local input and oversight.
3. **Mission Statement:** The organization/I&R service shall have a Mission Statement which is compatible with the purpose and philosophy of I&R.
4. **Constitution (Articles of Incorporation) and Bylaws:** If the organization/I&R service is incorporated as a nonprofit, it shall have a constitution or bylaws that meet the appropriate legal requirements.

5. **Program Evaluation:** The organization/I&R service shall conduct regular needs assessments to determine community I&R needs; formulate annual service goals, objectives and work plans which reflect priorities for service; review accomplishments relative to goals and objectives and adjust service priorities, as needed; and, on an annual basis, conduct an evaluation to measure the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of its services. The I&R service shall involve inquirers, service providers and other representatives of the community it serves in the evaluation process; and shall modify the program in response to evaluation outcomes.
6. **Organizational Policies:** The organization/I&R service shall have regularly reviewed written policies which clearly articulate the general principles by which it manages the I&R service. Organizational policies shall be available to all employees and shall, at a minimum, cover the following:
- Personnel;
 - Confidentiality;
 - Equipment;
 - Service delivery;
 - Financial procedures;
 - Office procedures;
 - Resource database management;
 - Staff use of the Internet; and
 - Emergency operating procedures.
7. **Code of Ethics:** The organization/I&R service shall have a Code of Ethics which establishes fundamental values and professional standards of conduct for staff in their relationships with their colleagues, their employers, the people they serve, the human service professionals with whom they interact and the community as a whole. The Code of Ethics shall be approved by the governing body of the organization and included in written policies that all staff receive and agree to follow. It shall address the following:
- Personal Integrity: e.g., exhibits honesty, patience, fairness, tolerance, and truthfulness; keeps promises; assumes responsibility for actions; avoids negativity.
 - Professional Excellence: e.g., strives to meet performance standards at the highest level, seeks opportunities for professional growth and development, suggests ideas for improving organizational products and services.
 - Relationship to Colleagues/Employees: e.g., listens to understand other points of view, shows respect for co-workers and staff supervised, is open to alternatives, works with others as a team, demonstrates leadership.
 - Relationship to Inquirers: e.g., respects the right of inquirers to privacy; confidentiality; self-determination; courteous, nonjudgmental and culturally appropriate treatment; and an appropriate level of support throughout the I&R process.
 - Relationship to the Community: e.g., appropriately represents the I&R service at community events, communicates effectively with agency staff on behalf of inquirers, follows organizational protocols when advocating for inquirers or doing system advocacy.
 - Conflict of Interest/Personal Gain: e.g., avoids or discloses outside activities or interests which conflict (or appear to conflict) with the interests of the I&R service, avoids participating in decisions that could result in personal benefit or benefit to his or her family, avoids accepting gratuities or favors for doing his or her job.

8. **Insurance Coverage:** The organization/I&R service shall have sufficient insurance coverage for personal and property liability, which protects both paid employees and volunteers.
9. **Finance:** Financing shall be sufficient to enable the I&R service to provide adequate service and maintain these standards.
 - The I&R service shall operate on a sound financial basis and exercise appropriate financial controls according to acceptable accounting practices and any other applicable standards.
 - The administrator, with the support of the board and/or advisory committee, shall maintain proper financial records in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, draw up an annual budget, project future needs, explore and encourage financial development and support for continuance of the program, and participate in saving resources to avoid duplication and to cut costs.
10. **Facilities:** The I&R service shall provide adequate space and equipment to ensure that staff can effectively perform their duties.
 - The I&R service shall provide sufficient space to ensure confidential interviewing.
 - The I&R service shall have sufficient space for files and technology needs.
 - The I&R service shall equip its offices with sufficient desks, tables, chairs, supplies, and lockable filing cabinets.
 - The I&R service shall use offices free of architectural barriers to people with physical disabilities per ADA requirements.
 - If the I&R service is designed to serve walk-ins, the office shall be accessible by public transportation, have available parking, and be geographically convenient to the population the program is designed to serve.

Standard 17: Personnel Administration

The I&R service shall provide a framework and mechanisms for program and personnel management and administration that guarantee the continuity and consistency required for effective service delivery.

Criteria

1. **Staff:** The I&R service shall recruit and hire service and administrative staff who are competent, ethical, qualified, and sufficient in number to implement service policies. The I&R service shall strive to have paid employees and volunteers who are reflective of the community they serve.
2. **Organization Chart:** The I&R service shall have a current organization chart no more than three years old defining levels of authority.
3. **Job Descriptions:** The I&R service shall have written, dated job descriptions for all staff and volunteers outlining responsibilities, essential job functions and lines of accountability. The job descriptions shall be dated within the last three years.
4. **Program Development and Administration:** The I&R service shall have qualified staff who are responsible for implementing and maintaining policies of the governing body, accountable to the governing body and responsible for program management and service delivery.
5. **Staff Supervision:** The I&R service shall provide for the ongoing supervision and annual evaluation of paid employees and volunteers by qualified I&R managers. Staff evaluations

shall address specific responsibilities and job functions outlined in the individuals' job descriptions. It is recommended that, where possible, the I&R service utilize attainment of Certified Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS) and Certified Resource Specialist (CRS) status through the AIRS Certification Program as criteria for pay increases and advancement within the organization.

6. Volunteers: The I&R service may use trained volunteers.

- The I&R service shall consider volunteers as unpaid staff members;
- The I&R service shall designate a coordinator of volunteers and provide an infrastructure to support them;
- The I&R service shall endeavor to reimburse volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses when resources are available; and
- The I&R service shall recognize volunteers for their support, time, and effort.

Standard 18: Staff Training

The I&R service shall have a training policy and make training available to paid and volunteer staff.

Criteria

1. The I&R service shall provide training for paid employees and volunteers which is based on pre-determined training goals with curriculum objectives defining behavioral outcomes for each module.
2. The I&R service shall provide an orientation for new employees and volunteers which addresses the role, mission, and function of the I&R service; the role of the governing body; federal, state and local laws affecting service delivery (e.g., abuse reporting); and the administrative structure, policies, and procedures of the organization.
3. Training for the I&R specialists shall include:
 - Pre-service training appropriate to the skills of new staff so that they meet expectations in interviewing techniques and attitudes; listening skills; communication; proper telephone usage; assessment techniques; information giving and referral procedures; follow-up; data recording; maintenance of inquirer records; organization of the Taxonomy; use of the resource database; job-related equipment and tools including database software and the organization's telephone system; working with multicultural/ethnic inquirers, older adults, people with disabilities, sexual minorities, and other special populations; and techniques for handling calls from lonely, suicidal, despondent, or angry inquirers or those in crisis.
 - On-the-job training which requires a sequential program of increasing levels of responsibility in handling inquiries (beginning with observation and ending with full responsibility for handling inquirers).
 - In-service training focusing on refining and updating the staff's information and referral skills. Topics shall include in-house operating procedures, areas of interest in the human service field, significant changes in laws affecting the local service delivery system or requirements for the I&R service, community services, personal skill development, assistance in maintaining objective attitudes toward the inquirer's needs, and use of services or technology. The I&R service may also provide tuition assistance to enable staff to pursue continuing education opportunities outside the organization and shall encourage professional staff to seek Certified Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS)

status through the AIRS certification program, or, if applicable in a particular field, certification through another program recognized at the state/provincial, regional or national level.

4. Training for resource staff shall include an overview of the local community service delivery system, inclusion/exclusion criteria for the resource database, data elements, Taxonomy indexing, database maintenance procedures, computerization, the development and distribution of database products and, when appropriate, training in the area of specialization of the I&R service (e.g., disability issues, aging issues). The I&R service may also provide tuition assistance to enable staff to pursue continuing education opportunities outside the organization and shall encourage professional staff to seek Certified Resource Specialist (CRS) status through the AIRS certification program, or, if applicable in a particular field, certification through another program recognized at the state/provincial, regional or national level.
5. The staff training program shall be responsive to the diverse learning styles of personnel including visual learners, auditory learners, and kinesthetic learners.
6. The content of the staff training program shall be consistent with the *ABC's of I&R* published by AIRS.
7. It is recommended that the competencies from the AIRS Certified Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS) Certification Program be used as training objectives.
8. Trainees (paid employees and volunteers) shall be evaluated using objective (e.g., written tests) and subjective (e.g., observation) measures and shall demonstrate a minimum level of competency before assuming their duties.
9. The I&R service shall systematically evaluate the effectiveness of its training program and the performance of its trainers.

Standard 19: Promotion and Outreach

The I&R service shall establish and maintain an ongoing program which increases public awareness of the availability of I&R services, their objectives and their value to the community.

Criteria

1. The I&R service shall develop a marketing plan which employs a systematic methodology for publicizing the agency's services to its targeted population and to other community resources (e.g., other agencies, religious organizations, police, schools).
2. The I&R service shall identify available resources for handling any resulting increase in volume before implementing its marketing plan.
3. The I&R service shall use various methods to publicize information and referral. These methods shall be tailored to meet the needs of diverse populations and may include:
 - Personal contact;
 - Speaking engagements;
 - Community meetings;
 - Public service announcements or listings;
 - Radio;
 - Paid advertisements;
 - Television;
 - Feature articles;
 - News stories;
 - Interviews;
 - Newsletters;

- Displays; brochures, posters, telephone
 - Telephone directories (multiple listings in blue pages or in white pages under "Information and Referral" and appropriate yellow-page listings); stickers, business cards, billboards and bus posters;
 - Printed materials such as Inserts in mailings of local businesses;
 - Booths at fairs; and
 - Internet Web pages.
4. The I&R service operating as part of a larger organization shall coordinate its publicity and public relations activities with those of its sponsor and shall take steps to ensure that all staff within the larger agency are aware of the scope and objectives of the I&R service.
 5. The I&R service shall publicize its services to special need groups in the community, such as minorities, people who speak languages other than English, people with disabilities, and rural and other isolated or underserved populations.
 6. The I&R service shall encourage other community services to promote and use I&R resources.
 7. The I&R service shall evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of its marketing plan(s) through a variety of means including examination of inquirer demographic information and tabulation of referral source data.
 8. The I&R service shall act as a resource and offer to other organizations consultation, technical assistance, and training on available community resources.
 9. Staff (paid and volunteer) shall improve public relations by communicating regularly with community service providers, government officials, and planning bodies; and by participating in various community activities, e.g., community resource fairs.
 10. The I&R service shall take steps to keep abreast of the issues and needs of the population it serves. Options include but are not limited to the following:
 - Analysis of inquiries;
 - Periodic surveys;
 - Community networks;
 - Participation on task forces;
 - Interviews with community members;
 - Periodic focus groups; and
 - Information gathered through its Web site.
 11. The I&R service shall maintain professional relationships with local, state/provincial, regional and national organizations which provide related services.

● GLOSSARY ●

Ability to Pay: See Sliding Scale.

Access to Service: The gateways through which information and referral services and resource database information are made available to potential inquirers and accessible to special populations such as older adults or people who have physical disabilities.

Accessible: Without physical, cultural, financial, or psychological barriers to service.

ACDs: See Automated Attendant.

Advocacy: Actions taken by the I&R service to ensure that people receive the benefits and services to which they are entitled and that organizations within the established service delivery system meet the collective needs of the community. For purposes of these standards, “advocacy” does not include legislative advocacy (lobbying). Also known as Intervention. See also Individual (Client) Advocacy and System Advocacy.

AIRS: See Alliance of Information and Referral Systems

AIRS Accreditation: The professional credential that is awarded internationally by AIRS to member I&R services that apply as formal recognition that they are operating in accordance with the *Standards for Professional Information & Referral*.

AKA Names: Names other than the legal name by which an organization is known. Includes former names, popular names and popular acronyms. “AKA” stands for “Also Known As”.

Alliance of Information and Referral Systems: The professional association for information and referral providers.

Application Process: The steps an individual must take to register for service with a service provider. The description generally includes a list of documentation that may be required. Also known as Application Procedures, Intake Procedures, Intake Process.

Area Served: The primary geographic unit(s) (e.g., census tracts, ZIP or postal codes, towns, cities, legislative districts) an organization is responsible for serving. Also known as Service Area.

Assessment: The process of helping an inquirer identify, analyze and prioritize his or her needs.

Automated Attendant: A menu-driven system accessible by telephone that allows inquirers to select and listen to prerecorded information about specific types of services. Includes integrated voice response systems that provide more sophisticated programming options. Also known as ACDs; Automated Call Attendant; Integrated Voice Response Systems, IVRs.

Automated Call Attendant: See Automated Attendant.

Board of Directors: The governing body of an organization which is responsible for program planning and evaluation, policy setting, personnel administration, program oversight, public relations, and fiscal management.

Call Center: An umbrella term that generally refers to reservations centers, help desks, information lines, or customer service centers which use sophisticated telephone technology, regardless of how they are organized or what types of transactions they handle.

Callers: See Inquirers.

Care Management: See Case Management.

Case Management: A service which develops case plans for the evaluation, treatment and/or care of individuals who, because of age, illness, disability or other difficulties, need assistance in planning and arranging for services; which assesses the individual's needs; coordinates the delivery of needed services; ensures that services are obtained in accordance with the case plan; and follows up and monitors progress to ensure that services are having a beneficial impact on the individual. Also known as Care Management.

CIRS: Certified Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS) is a professional credential awarded internationally by AIRS to individuals who have demonstrated through the program that they have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and work-related behaviors required by I&R specialists to successfully execute their duties.

Classification System: A structure for categorizing available human service information in the I&R resource database in a systematic, unambiguous way. A standard classification system provides a common language for human services, simplifies retrieval of service information, increases reliability of planning data, makes evaluation processes consistent, and facilitates national comparisons of data. Also known as Service Classification System, Taxonomy.

Client Advocacy: See Individual (Client) Advocacy.

Clients: See Inquirers.

Collaboration: Two or more organizations working together to realize common goals. Related concepts include Alliances, Coalitions, Coordination, Partnerships. See also Database Collaborative.

Community Resource Advisor: See Information and Referral Specialist (I&R Specialist).

Comprehensive I&R Service: I&R programs that maintain information about the full range of human services and which function as the primary source of information about and linkage with human services providers in their community. See also Specialized I&R Services. Also known as Generic I&R Services.

Confidentiality: The requirement that the I&R service disclose personal information about the identity of inquirers, their requests and the resources given to them only when necessary. Information about an inquirer must not be shared with others unless disclosure is required by law, explicit permission has been secured from the person to do so, or unless the person is in danger of harming him or herself or another. See also Identifying Information.

Consumers: See Inquirers.

Contacts: See Inquirers.

Crisis Intervention: A service which provides immediate assistance to people who are in acute emotional distress; who are or perceive themselves to be in life-threatening situations; who are a danger to themselves or to others; or who are hysterical, frightened or otherwise unable to cope with a problem that requires immediate action. The objective of crisis intervention is to defuse the critical nature of the situation, ensure the person's safety, and return the individual to a state of equilibrium in which he or she is capable of identifying and seeking solutions to the problem.

CRS: Certified Resource Specialist (CRS) is a professional credential awarded internationally by AIRS to individuals who have demonstrated through the program that they have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and work-related behaviors required by resource specialists to successfully execute their duties.

Culturally Appropriate: The ability to provide assistance in ways that are helpful, effective and strengthening to those served through understanding of and respect for diverse cultures. Also known as Culturally Competent.

Culturally Competent: See Culturally Appropriate.

Data Collection Policies: See Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria.

Data Elements: The individual segments of information maintained in separate fields in a database, usually about an organization, its programs, and its services in a resource database. The term may also apply to information in an inquirer database. See also Resource Database and Resource Profile.

Database Collaborative: A group of I&R services that agree to share responsibility for maintaining information about local community resources as a means of avoiding duplication of database maintenance activities and achieving broader coverage of different types of community resources. See also Collaboration.

Disability Access: Features such as special parking, ramps, elevators, wide doors and accessible bathrooms which ensure that a facility is barrier-free for individuals who use a wheelchair. Use of sign language interpreters, Braille or recorded information and telephone access via a TDD/TTY are examples of access for people with other types of disabilities.

Eligibility Criteria: The guidelines a service provider uses to determine who is qualified to receive services. Eligibility can be stated in terms of requirements, e.g., "the individual must be a single parent" or exclusions, e.g., "we do not serve people who are homeless".

Employer Identification Number (EIN): A unique, 9-digit number assigned by the Internal Revenue Service to all organizations required to file a business tax return, regardless of whether they have employees. The EIN number can be used to permit record matching to eliminate duplicates when records maintained by different local I&R services are combined in statewide I&R databases or to link I&R records with those in databases maintained by organizations outside the I&R field.

Empowerment: Helping inquirers understand the steps that need to be taken to obtain needed services so that they can advocate on their own behalf. See also Self-Advocacy.

Evaluation (Program): The systematic process of reviewing services provided by an agency in relation to its objectives and standards in order to improve overall operation of the individual I&R service and the I&R system as a whole.

Evaluation (Staff): The systematic process of reviewing the work of individual staff members of the I&R service in accordance with their job descriptions to provide feedback on performance and to maintain a high level of quality in service delivery. Applicable to paid and volunteer staff.

Follow-Up: The process of contacting inquirers and/or the organizations to which they were referred to determine whether their needs are being met and if not, why not. Additional assistance to the inquirer in locating or using needed services may be a part of follow-up. Follow-up may also be used to determine if the inquirer is satisfied with the I&R service.

“Full Service” I&R: An I&R service that performs all necessary I&R functions including maintaining a resource database and providing I&R services for inquirers. A “full service” I&R is contrasted to those that prefer to share I&R functions with another I&R service (e.g., one I&R service might build and maintain the resource database while another might assume responsibility for service delivery).

Generic I&R Service: See Comprehensive I&R Service.

I&R Service: See Information and Referral Service.

I&R Specialist: See Information and Referral Specialist.

I&R System: See Information and Referral System.

Identifying Information: Information about inquirers (e.g., name, address, telephone number, Social Security Number) which makes personal identification possible. See also Confidentiality.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: The guidelines an I&R service utilizes to determine the scope and content of its resource database. Inclusion criteria specify the types of organizations that are priorities for inclusion and, if exhaustive, list the only types of organizations the database will contain. Exclusion criteria specify the types of organizations whose inclusion is prohibited. Also known as Data Collection Policies.

Independent Access to Resource Information: Gateways to community resource information which allow end users to conduct their own searches without speaking with an I&R specialist or other professional. Includes print and electronic directories, public access copies of the resource database and access to the database via an Internet Web page maintained by the I&R service. Also known as Self-Service Systems.

Indexing: The process of assigning to records in the resource database keywords and/or codes that can be used as search keys. Examples include service and target group terms/codes from the Taxonomy, geographic codes/descriptors for area of location and area served and language codes.

Individual (Client) Advocacy: Intervention by the I&R service on behalf of individuals to help them establish eligibility for or obtain needed services when they have been denied benefits or services to which they are entitled, when they need assistance to communicate their needs to a service provider or otherwise effectively represent themselves or when they have a complaint about a service. Individual advocacy efforts seek to meet individual needs without attempting to change social institutions. See also Advocacy. Also known as Client Advocacy.

Information and Assistance Provider: See Information and Referral Service.

Information and Referral Service: An organization (or program within a larger organization) whose primary function is to link people in need of human services with appropriate service providers who can meet their needs. I&R services may be comprehensive covering the whole range of human services or may specialize in resources for a particular population, e.g., people who are homeless, people with disabilities, older adults, people with AIDS. Also known as Information and Assistance Provider (in the aging network) and Resource and Referral Agency (in the child care arena).

Information and Referral Specialist: A paid or volunteer staff person who is trained to assess inquirer needs, provide information about or linkage with appropriate service providers, offer advocacy assistance when required, and follow-up, when necessary, to ensure that the individual's needs were met. Also known as Community Resource Advisor.

Information and Referral System: A collaborative group of local comprehensive and specialized I&R services that have agreed to coordinate their resource maintenance, service delivery, publicity and other functions to avoid duplication of effort, encourage service integration and provide seamless access to information about community resources for people who need it.

Information Provision: The process (carried out by a paid or volunteer staff person) of providing descriptive information about a service provider to the inquirer. Information can range from a limited response (such as an organization's name, telephone number, and address) to detailed data about community service systems (such as explaining how a group intake system works for a particular agency), agency policies, and procedures for application.

Inquirer Data Collection: The systematic process of recording and organizing essential information about inquirers, their needs, the referral(s) made on their behalf, and follow-up results, when available.

Inquirers: Individuals and organizations seeking information about or linkage with community service providers through the I&R service. Also known as Callers, Consumers, Clients, or Contacts.

Intake Procedures: See Application Process.

Intake Process: See Application Process.

Integrated Service Delivery System: A collaborative group of local service providers who agree to deliver their services in a coordinated way to ensure broad access to community services, maximize the utilization of existing resources, avoid duplication of effort and gaps in services and facilitate the ability of people who need services to easily find the most appropriate provider.

Integrated Voice Response Systems: See Automated Attendant.

Intervention: See Advocacy.

IVRs: See Automated Attendant.

Kiosk: A free-standing structure, often located in malls or other public places, which houses community resource information that people can access without outside assistance.

Legal Status of an Organization: The legal standing of an organization as a private, nonprofit corporation, a for-profit (commercial, proprietary) organization, a government (public) organization, or a grass roots entity such as a support group that is not incorporated and has no formal status as an organization.

Legislative Advocacy: Attempts to influence the introduction or review of pending bills, ordinances or administrative rulings with the objective of having an impact on the passage or defeat of such legislation. Also known as Lobbying.

Lobbying: See Legislative Advocacy.

Mediated Access: See Supported Access to Information/Services.

Outcome Measurement: The process of assessing the benefits or changes for individuals or populations as a result of participating in program activities. Outcomes may relate to knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, behavior, condition, or status.

Outreach: Special activities undertaken by the I&R service to ensure that specific target populations and/or community organizations are aware of services that are available through the I&R system.

Program Capacity: The total number of individuals a program is able to serve at any one time.

Referral Provision: The process of assessing the needs of the inquirer, identifying appropriate resources, assessing appropriate response modes, indicating organizations capable of meeting those needs, providing enough information about each organization to help inquirers make an informed choice, helping inquirers for whom services are unavailable by locating alternative resources, and, when necessary, actively participating in linking the inquirer to needed services by scheduling appointments, three-way calling, or negotiating for the inquirer.

Resource and Referral Agency: See Information and Referral Service (I&R Service).

Resource Database: A computerized body of information about community resources maintained by the I&R service which can be accessed in a variety of ways including alphabetically by organization name, by type of service provided, by target population served, by geographical or political subdivision served and by geographic location. Information in the database is structured into records (one for each service provider) with separate fields for each data element that is part of the resource profile. The resource database supports the I&R process but also serves as an inventory of human services for the community. Also known as Resource File. See also Data Elements, Resource Profile and Resource Information System.

Resource File: See Resource Database.

Resource Information System: The full set of resource tools maintained by the I&R service and used by I&R specialists to identify services and programs available to the public. In addition to the resource database, the resource information system may include telephone books, a pamphlet file, a small reference library, and a collection of useful Web sites or other electronic resources. See also Resource Database.

Resource Profile: A standardized set of information that is gathered about each service provider in the resource database. Included are data elements which describe the organization itself (e.g., legal status, source of funds, licensing/accreditation information), the services it provides, the targets for service and the conditions under which services are available (e.g., eligibility criteria, application procedures, hours, fees). See also Data Elements and Resource Database.

Self-Advocacy: Actions taken by an inquirer to obtain the information, services, respect and recognition to which they are entitled without the active intervention of an I&R specialist. See also Empowerment.

Self-Determination: The right of inquirers to make their own choices and decisions at each step in the I&R process.

Self-Service Systems: See Independent Access to Resource Information.

Service Classification System: See Classification System.

Service Area: See Area Served.

Service Gaps: Services needed by people in the community that are not adequately provided by organizations that are part of the local service delivery system. Services may be unavailable altogether or they may be available but on an inadequate basis, e.g., they may be too expensive, not available in the needed language, have eligibility criteria that exclude the inquirer, etc.

Sliding Scale: A practice in which an organization's fees for service are based on the individual's ability to pay rather than being a fixed cost for everyone who receives the service. Also known as Ability to Pay.

Specialized I&R Services: Programs that maintain information about community resources that are appropriate for a specific target population and which link individuals who are in need of specialized services with appropriate resources, and/or provide information about agencies and organizations that offer specialized services. See also Comprehensive I&R Services.

Staff: The paid employees and volunteers who are responsible for the delivery, management, or support of information and referral services or for database management.

Standards: Reference points that define expected practices within a field and can be used to measure the extent to which individual organizations are in compliance with those requirements.

Statewide/Province-Wide Database: A collection of local I&R databases maintained in a standard format which have been consolidated into a larger database with statewide or province-wide geographic coverage.

Supported Access to Information/Services: Situations in which inquirers receive assistance and support from an I&R specialist, case manager or other professional who makes an assessment of their situation, identifies appropriate resources to meet their needs, contacts those resources, and/or arranges for them to receive services. Also known as Mediated Access.

System Advocacy: Actions taken by the I&R service to seek changes in community conditions, structures or institutions when modifications in the service delivery system as a whole are required to ensure the adequate availability of essential community services. Such advocacy may include the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on human service needs. See also Advocacy.

Target Population: The individuals for whom a particular service is intended.

Taxonomy: See Classification System.

Technology: Telephone systems, telephony, telecommunications, I&R software packages, directories on diskette and self-service mechanisms such as automated attendants/interactive voice response systems, fax-on-demand, community kiosks and searchable I&R databases on the Internet.

Uniform Resource Locator: See Web Site Address.

Units of Service: The ways in which a program's productivity is measured, e.g., the number of counseling sessions conducted, the number of advocacy materials distributed, the number of meals served, the number of participants assisted, the number of beds filled.

Update Verification Procedures: Procedures which can be used to validate the accuracy of suggested changes in an agency record e.g., obtaining a signature on an agency update form.

URL: See Web Site Address.

Volunteers: Individuals who offer their services and work on a full or part-time basis without remuneration.

Waiting List: In situations where an organization's program is currently full, the list of individuals who will be admitted next when space becomes available.

Web Site Address: The location on the Internet of an organization's Web page (HTML-based documents which often include graphics and sound as well as text). Also known as the URL or Uniform Resource Locator.